

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 4 June 2025 at 2.00pm.

Present:

Mr R Bremner (Remote)
Mr I Brown
Mrs I Campbell (Remote)
Mr S Coghill (Remote)
Ms S Fanet (Remote)
Mr J Grafton

Dr M Gregson
Mr P Logue
Mr W Mackay (Remote)
Mr D Millar
Mrs M Paterson (Remote)

Non-Member also present:

Mr A Graham
Mr D Macpherson

In attendance:

Mr D Brown, Chief Executive
Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People
Ms B Scott, Chief Officer – Early Years and Primary Education
Ms A Jansson, Interim Chief Officer – Early Years and Primary Education
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer
Mr R MacKay, Development Officer, Education and Learning
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr D Ansdell, Head of Gaelic and Scots for The Scottish Government
Mr J Graham, Chief Executive Officer of An Comunn Gàidhealach
Miss J Macrae, Principal Teacher, and pupils from Muirtown Primary School

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr D Millar in the Chair

Business

1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr A MacKintosh.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Items 4 and 7 – Dr M Gregson

3. Good News

The Committee were provided with a short video highlighting various developments and initiatives as well as items of good news.

In addition, Mr Derek Brown, Chief Executive of Highland Council spoke about the recent Gaelic Conference held in Inverness where the focus was very much on developing the Gaelic economy. He had addressed the conference, in Gaelic, emphasising the importance of partnership working and linking closely with Gaelic Medium Education.

In discussion, the wide range of opportunities shown in the video to speak Gaelic was welcomed as was the showcasing of what was happening throughout Highland. The Gaelic Team were commended for their hard work in this regard. The Chief Executive too was congratulated for actively learning Gaelic and this was something to be proud of.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news as presented.

4. Scottish Languages Bill – Areas of Linguistic Significance

Transparency Statement: Dr M Gregson made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he was a member of Cultarlann Inbhir Nis. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. G/6/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People, and Mr Douglas Ansdell, Head of Gaelic and Scots Unit for The Scottish Government provided an update on the Scottish Languages Bill.

The Scottish Languages Bill was at an important stage, with the final concluding debate taking place on 17 June 2025. Amendments to the Bill were due on 9 and 10 June and Mr Ansdell highlighted those expected. Once the Bill was passed, the Gaelic and Scots Unit would work with Highland's Gaelic Team and others, to shape the guidance that would be prepared for Areas of Linguistic Significance.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members commended Mr Ansdell for his efforts in promoting the Gaelic Language within the Scottish Government, and it was said that the Highland Gaelic Team were committed and dedicated to do the same;
- information was sought, and provided, in terms of determining what qualified an Area of Linguistic Significance;
- clarification was sought, and provided, in terms of the language standards and it was confirmed that guidance was issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig;
- information was sought in terms of the financial memorandum, further if the Amendments would be reflected;
- in terms of funding, it was the Scottish Government's intention to have an additional fund to support Areas of Linguistic Significance, however, this was not likely to happen in this financial year;
- the final list of Amendments was expected to be published on the Parliamentary website by 10 June;

- in response to a question, it was highlighted how areas with a lower percentage of people with Gaelic skills might still be considered as an Area of Linguistic Significance;
- it was queried if Gaelic provision in childcare might be a weak link. In response, the Gaelic Team had been looking at age related statistics to discover what intervention might be needed.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the report; and
- AGREED** continued preparatory work to ensure Highland Council was able to respond to the new duties and opportunities presented by the Scottish Languages Bill.

5. Gaelic Conference

There had been circulated Report No. G/7/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The aim of the Gaelic Economic Conference was to highlight the cultural and economic value of the language across Highland. The event was attended by over one hundred delegates from a wide range of sectors. The Depute First Minister had recorded a message, a copy of which would be circulated to Members, in which she emphasised her support for Gaelic in the economy, particularly in rural areas. The conference showed that Gaelic was an economic asset and emphasised the importance of youth engagement and community development as part of that.

Delegate feedback would be analysed and this would feed into the proposed future next steps.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- it was important to recognise and promote the work Highland Council did, in respect of the Gaelic Language, and how this fitted in with the rest of the Gaelic world. This Conference had provided an opportunity to do that;
- the attendance of Councillors at the Conference was welcomed;
- it was important to build on the outcomes of the Conference and any other opportunities which might arise. It was suggested a timeline be prepared with this in mind;
- the post-Conference analysis would be reported to the next Gaelic Committee and would give an indication if further Conferences were possible;
- Gaelic was now hugely important not only in schools but out in the community and the workplace; and
- speaking through Gaelic was a real strength of the event.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the report;
- NOTED** the key messages from the conference; and
- AGREED** next steps in section 9 of the report.

6. Gaelic Education

There had been circulated Report No. G/8/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People and there was a presentation by Muirtown Primary School.

The Head Teacher and pupils informed the Committee how Gaelic played a big part in their school. Gaelic was now prominent in every day life in Highland with it being used on street signs, place names and in the media. Being able to speak Gaelic would therefore open up lots of opportunities for them in the future but meantime they were happy to share Gaelic across the school community. Learning Gaelic had been fun and they made particular reference to Seachdain Na Gaidhlig (World Gaelic Week) where they were the only non-Gaelic Medium School to be filmed for online assemblies. Joy Dunlop, one of Seachdain Na Gaidhlig's organisers, had visited the school and the pupils had taken the opportunity to present Gaelic weather forecasts to her.

The Teacher and pupils were congratulated for their excellent presentation. The Council Leader too had visited Muirtown Primary with Joy Dunlop and the standard of videos, weather presentations and concerts had been outstanding. The young people involved were true ambassadors for Gaelic learning. This highlighted why Highland Council was the leading authority for Gaelic Education in Scotland and the success of the 1+2 Language Initiative.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the leadership shown at the Muirtown to grow interest and involvement in Gaelic across the school;
- ii. **NOTED** and welcomed the progress towards the GLP target for Gaelic education in L2 and L3 in Highland in paragraph 6.2 of the report
- iii. **NOTED** the strategic professional learning opportunities for teachers in Gaelic education; and
- iv. **AGREED** the next steps for Gaelic Education.

7. GLP Progress (PRMS)

Transparency Statement: Dr M Gregson made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he was a member of Cultarlann Inbhir Nis. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. G/9/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Officers were thanked for the positive paper which highlighted the high level of delivery and the low level of slippage. The Gaelic language was now seen in a more positive light. There was a huge opportunity in Highland, with cruise liners, especially in the port of Invergordon, where there was an interest in Gaelic and Highland culture. This could not only generate profit for businesses but drive about an interest in learning Gaelic in those areas.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

8. Mod Lochaber (ACG)

There had been circulated Report No. G/10/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Mr James Graham, Chief Executive Officer of An Comunn Gàidhealach gave an update on the preparatory work taking place in advance of the Lochaber Royal National Mòd. All the main stakeholders were working in tandem. Regular meetings were held to make sure all the strategic issues, such as infrastructure, were in place and appreciation was expressed to Council Officers, from various Services, for their assistance. Entries for the Mod had just closed and he was pleased to report that numbers had increased since the previous Mod in Oban. Business engagement sessions had been held in association with Lochaber Chamber of Commerce and this had been hugely beneficial. Overall, it was hoped to deliver a gold standard event.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- the increase in numbers was welcomed and an indication was sought as to the demographics of this. An analysis had still to be carried out but initial indications were that the increase was from junior levels and schools who had benefitted from the Mod Academy;
- Mods usually attracted competitors from the local area;
- information was sought as to how younger competitors could be encouraged to continue competing in Mods and then enter adult competitions. Discussions were taking place with Education Scotland to stress the significant role Mods, both local and national, had in enriching young people in Education and a formal request had been made that it be formally included in the curriculum as an integral component;
- it was queried if work was taking place to target particular areas of opportunity in Highland, similar to the Mod Academy initiative. This would take the form of a Gaelic National Youth Choir which would dovetail with Mods and junior choirs;
- there was a growing network of twenty local Mods with a further two hopefully being added next year. An Comunn Gàidhealach was able to offer practical and modest grant support;
- Lochaber was looking forward to the Mod which it was hoped would be accessible to all. The Mod would not only be about music but about the other opportunities it brought; and
- it was understood that Mr Graham was to leave An Comunn Gàidhealach and was joining Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Committee wished him well for the future.

The Committee **NOTED** the actions to date regarding the management and organisation of the Lochaber Royal National Mòd 10 - 18 October 2025.

9. Na Trads – Economic Impact Assessment

There had been circulated Report No. G/11/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Members voiced their support for the Na Trads. It was an example of excellent partnership working, across various organisations, showcasing Highland generated and nurtured talent. It profiled the Gaelic language, arts and culture and enabled Highland to make a comparison with other areas. It also provided an opportunity for a wide range of groups to be nominated and recognised for the work they were doing

in Highland communities and schools. It was important Highland continued to work collaboratively with Na Trads going forward.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** and recognised how Na Trads fostered strengthened partnerships with stakeholders to amplify Gaelic and cultural benefits, sustainability and creative industries.

The meeting ended at 4.05pm.